AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 4, line 7, with the following amended paragraph:

One difficulty with network processors is that loading a program on a network processor takes several seconds and brings the network processor off line so that packets are either dropped or passed through the network processor without processing. Thus, as an example, a network processor used in a router will not route packets while a new program is loaded. In systems that use fixed combinations of fields to process packets, the programming limitation of network processors does not present a substantial difficulty since the program running on the network processor need not change very often. However, in order to provide services to packet based networks, such as with the programmable network nodes disclosed in U. S. Patent Application Serial Number [[   ]] 09/928,771, filed August 13, 2001, ~~(Attorney Docket No. 66101.   )~~ entitled "System and Method for Programming Network Nodes," which is incoporated herein by reference, the program running on the network processor may have to change more often.